CLAIMS

We claim:

[c1] 1. A method in a computing system for characterizing customers and products based upon product orders placed by customers over a selected preceding period of time, comprising:

for each of a plurality of customers:

determining the number of product units ordered by the customer during the period;

determining, for each product ordered by the customer during the period, how long after the product was available for ordering before the customer ordered the product;

if the number of product units ordered by the customer during the period does not exceed a first threshold, determining a customer score of zero for the customer;

if the number of product units ordered by the customer during the period exceeds the first threshold, determining a customer score for the customer that reflects the extent to which products ordered by the customer during the period were ordered within a second threshold of the dates on which the products became available for ordering;

for each of a plurality of products:

determining a product score for the product that is based upon the sum of the customer scores of the customers that have ordered the product during the selected period, and

selecting a subset of the plurality of products having the highest products scores as early adopter picks.

[c2] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein each determined product score further reflects the extent to which the corresponding product both (1) has a high price, and (2) recently became available for ordering.

[c3] 3. A method in a computing system for characterizing customers based upon orders placed by customers over a selected preceding period of time, comprising:

for each of a plurality of customers:

determining the number of product units ordered by the customer during the period;

determining, for each product ordered by the customer during the period, how long the product was available for ordering before the customer ordered the product; and

determining a customer score for the customer that reflects the extent to which products ordered by the customer during the period were ordered within a second threshold of the dates on which the products became available for ordering.

[c4] 4. The method of claim 3 wherein, for each of a plurality of customers, a customer score is determined only if the number of product units ordered by the customer during the period exceeds a first threshold.

[c5] 5. The method of claim 3, further comprising identifying a proper subset of the customers having the highest scores.

[c6] 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising displaying a list of the identified customers.

[c7] 7. A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to characterize a customer based upon orders placed by the customer over a selected preceding period of time, comprising:

determining the number of item units ordered by the customer during the period;

determining, for each item ordered by the customer during the period, how long after the item became available for ordering the customer ordered the item; and

if the number of item units ordered by the customer during the period exceeds a first threshold, determining a customer score for the customer that reflects the extent to which item ordered by the customer during the period were ordered within a second threshold of the dates on which the item became available for ordering.

[c8] 8. One or more computer memories collectively containing a data structure characterizing customers that comprises a plurality of entries each corresponding to a customer who places orders at at least a predetermined minimum rate, each entry comprising:

information identifying the customer to whom the entry corresponds; and

a score indicating the extent to which the customer to whom the entry corresponds orders particular items promptly after they become available for ordering.

[c9] 9. One or more computer memories collectively containing a data structure comprising a plurality of entries, each entry identifying a product purchased early and in unusual proportion by customers that typically order products promptly after they become available for ordering.

[c10] 10. A method in a computing system for characterizing an item, comprising:

determining a score for the item reflecting the extent to which the item has been ordered by customers who have been determined to commonly order items promptly after they become available; and

scaling the score in a manner that causes it to positively relate to the item's price and negatively relate to the amount of time that has elapsed since the item became available for ordering.

[c11] 11. The method of claim 10 wherein an item detail web page is associated with the product, the method further comprising including in the item detail web page an indication of the item's scaled score.

[c12] 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the included indication explicitly indicates the item's scaled score.

[c13] 13. The method of claim 11 wherein the included indication explicitly indicates a range into which the item's scaled score falls.

[c14] 14. The method of claim 11 wherein the included indication indicates a relationship between the item's scaled score and scaled scores for additional items.

[c15] 15. A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to characterize items by:

for each of a plurality of items:

determining a score for the item in a manner that causes it to (1) positively relate to the extent to which the item has been ordered by customers who have been determined to commonly order items promptly after they become

available, (2) positively relate to the item's price, and (3) negatively relate to the amount of time that has elapsed since the item became available for ordering; and

storing indications identifying at least a portion of the items having the highest scores.

[c16] 16. The computer-readable medium of claim 15 wherein the contents of the computer-readable medium further cause the computer system to store in conjunction with the stored indications the scores determined for the corresponding items.

[c17] 17. The computer-readable medium of claim 15 wherein the contents of the computer-readable medium further cause the computer system to generate a document identifying least a portion of the items having the highest scores.

[c18] 18. The computer-readable medium of claim 15 wherein the contents of the computer-readable medium further cause the computer system to transmit to customers a document identifying least a portion of the items having the highest scores.

[c19] 19. The computer-readable medium of claim 15 wherein the contents of the computer-readable medium further cause the computer system to transmit to make available for retrieval by customers a document identifying least a portion of the items having the highest scores.

[c20] 20. One or more computer memories collectively containing a data structure comprising a plurality of entries each corresponding to a different product, each entry comprising:

information identifying the product to which the entry corresponds; and

a score indicating the extent to which the product (1) has been ordered by customers who have been determined to commonly order items promptly after they become available, (2) has a high price, and (3) recently became available for ordering.

[c21] 21. A method in a computing system for promoting items, comprising:

among a multiplicity of users who have placed orders for items, identifying a plurality of users who have each placed orders for at least a threshold number of items shortly after the items became available;

among a multiplicity of items, identifying a plurality of items each purchased by at least a threshold number of the identified users greater than one; and

promoting the identified items.

[c22] 22. The method of claim 21 wherein identifying users comprises identifying users who have ordered at least a threshold number of items.

[c23] 23. The method of claim 21 wherein identifying users comprises identifying users who ordered at least a threshold number of items during a selected foregoing period.

[c24] 24. The method of claim 21, further comprising determining a score for each of the multiplicity of users reflecting the extent to which the user has ordered items promptly after they became available for ordering.

[c25] 25. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying users comprises identifying users whose scores exceed a threshold score.

[c26] 26. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying items comprises identifying items where the sum of the scores of the users that have ordered the item exceeds a threshold total.

[c27] 27. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying items comprises:

for each of the multiplicity of items, determining an item score by summing scores of the users that have ordered the item; and

identifying the items whose item scores are in a preselected percentile of all item scores.

[c28] 28. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying items comprises identifying items whose prices are high relative to the prices of the multiplicity of items.

[c29] 29. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying items comprises identifying items that recently became available for ordering.

[c30] 30. The method of claim 21, further comprising selecting users among the multiplicity of users who frequently order high-priced items, and wherein identifying items comprises identifying items at least a threshold percentage of whose orders were by selected users.

[c31] 31. The method of claim 21, further comprising storing a list of the identified items.

[c32] 32. The method of claim 21 wherein promoting the identified items comprises displaying a list of the identified items.

[c33] 33. The method of claim 21 wherein promoting the identified items comprises sending an email message containing a list of the identified items.

[c34] 34. A computing system for promoting items, comprising:

a user identification subsystem that identifies, among a multiplicity of users who have placed orders for items, a plurality of users who have each placed orders for at least a threshold number of items shortly after the items became available;

an item identification subsystem that identifies, among a multiplicity of items, a plurality of items each purchased by at least a threshold number of the identified users greater than one; and

an item promotion subsystem that promotes the identified items.